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Reese, Niklas

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"Only if You Really, Really Need It": Social Rights Consciousness in the Philippines

Niklas Reese

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This article argues that communitarianism, as the prevalent citizenship paradigm in the Philippines, observable also in modest expectations towards government services among Filipinos and a high emphasis on individual and community action, can be used to explain the lack of political change in the Philippines. In its first part, the article presents data on the sense of citizenship and concepts of social rights and obligations among Filipinos by combining findings from a series of problem-centered interviews with young urban professionals and quantitative data collected within annual surveys by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) on government, social inequality, and citizenship. The second part of the article attributes these findings to everyday concepts of citizenship as ideal-typical state responsibility theories and modern citizenship paradigms. By including ethnographic data, it discovers significant traits of communitarianism in Philippine everyday life. This section goes on to present how communitarianism (with its inherent character of exclusivity) impedes a democratic culture and moreover, how it is unable to serve as a guiding social philosophy in unifying a large-scale society mainly consisting of citizens who are strangers (*ibang tao*) to each other. Nevertheless, in conclusion, the article suggests the possibility of deepening and broadening the sense of citizenship in the Philippine society and its respect for the stranger by drawing on elements of Filipino culture.

Keywords: Citizenship; Communitarianism; Philippines; Political Culture; Social Rights

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty persists in the Philippines despite economic growth. Political patronage and oligarchic rule remain the order of the day. On the other hand, the rhetoric of change is pervasive in civil society discourse (Department of Political Science [DPC], 2010). This article draws on research with a focus on the *sense of citizenship* in the Philippines (Reese, 2015) asking to which extent Filipinos and Filipinas are willing to stand up for their political beliefs and personal goals (active citizenship) and which role they allot to the public, the government, and the state to provide for or at least support these beliefs and goals.

The first part of the article focuses on the extent of social rights that respondents feel entitled to and whether they consider the government to be the main duty bearer to fulfill these rights. Utilizing a qualitative approach and backing it up with quantitative data reveals Filipinos' general readiness to take political action (active citizenship) as well as their general expectations towards the state

(passive citizenship). However, when respondents are asked to spell out these expectations (for instance, in terms of actual and concrete services), these are comparably modest and very basic. Here, I show that most Filipinos have modest expectations regarding government service and that most place high emphasis on individual and community action as the source of change in their lives.

The second part of the article attributes these empirical findings to ideal-typical state responsibility theories and modern citizenship paradigms (e.g., liberalism, communitarianism, and republicanism). Here, I argue that communitarianism is the prevalent "state responsibilization theory" (Zintl, 1996, p. 306) amongst Filipinos, which is further supported by ethnographic data. Communitarianism (with its inherent character of exclusivity), however, is proven to impede a democratic culture and is unable to serve as a guiding social philosophy in unifying large-scale societies mainly consisting of citizens who are strangers (in the Philippines, *ibang tao*) to each other.

The qualitative data employed in the article was gathered within a series of problem-centered interviews conducted between 2010 and 2012 with 28 young urban professionals from Manila, Davao, and Dumaguete, chosen by theoretical sampling.[1] Variables used for the theoretical sampling were, among others, age, gender, years in college visited, place of origin (city or countryside), as well as occupation of the parents (socio-economic background). However, the only variable which turned out to be significant for their sense of citizenship was the organizational background of the respondents. Those who had been involved in a structurally transformative (left) activism had a much stronger sense of citizenship than those who had been involved in non-transformative activism or even those who had never been involved in any political organization at all.

My research focused on the political attitudes of urban professionals in precarious (*prekarisierte*) work settings, in this case, agents working in international call centers. They can be understood as part of the lower middle class.[2] The 28 respondents were interviewed three times: An introductory biographical interview was followed by two problem-centered interviews. While the first problem-centered interview focused on the question of how they solve problems at work (enterprise-level citizenship), the latter focused on citizenship activities and their sense of entitlement towards the government and other duty bearers (such as family and friends). The questionnaires were comprised of semi-structured and open questions, but also included several items which were to be answered within an ordinal scale.[3] Following a dual research strategy, the findings of these interviews were compared with quantitative data mainly by triangulating the qualitative data with the results of surveys done by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) on government, social inequality, and

1 In the following text, short phrases and statements from interviews are used randomly to illustrate respondents' attitudes and general concerns.

2 To identify which attitudes may be considered specifically middle-class, the study conducted control interviews with people classified as lower class.

3 The interviews were conducted in a mix of English, Tagalog, and Cebuano, the dominant language in the Southern Philippines. This is why some quotes are in English, while others are in Filipino vernaculars. Furthermore, I indicated the Tagalog phrases used in the ISSP surveys.

citizenship (ISSP, 2008; ISSP, 2012a; ISSP, 2012b). The analysis was further enriched by a validation process undertaken in the form of focus group discussions with the respondents and expert interviews.[4]

Why a Sense of Citizenship?

Gaventa and Barrett (2010) define *citizenship* as "the ability to exercise voice and claim rights from states and political authorities" (p. 57). Citizenship is therefore made up of two dimensions – an active dimension (exercising voice) and a passive one (claiming rights and demanding accountability). Both dimensions are considered core elements of good governance – next to elements such as government effectiveness, rule of law, political stability, absence of violence, regulatory quality, and control of corruption (Kabeer & Haq Kabir, 2009). Moreover, a pronounced sense of citizenship is considered necessary for political change to happen. Even if political institutions (such as an independent judiciary and a strong legislature) have developed, they are likely to eventually weaken if not inhabited by politically-minded citizens. *Righting institutions*, which is at the center of the debate around good governance, is thus not sufficient. "There is no lack of laws . . . the problem is enforcement", as Michael Tan (2014b) resonates a widespread sentiment in the Philippines. The sense of citizenship used in this article can thus be defined as (a) considering oneself or others to be rightfully entitled to something (a passive sense of citizenship, or a sense of entitlement) and (b) being ready to stand up for what one considers 'right' (active sense of citizenship and readiness to political action). In the absence of a sense of having claims and rights (a sense of passive citizenship) towards the government, there is no demand for rights or political change, and those in charge will not be held accountable (a sense of active citizenship). To understand the persistence of inequality and oligarchy in the Philippines, it might therefore be a useful endeavor to investigate the cognitive structures of ordinary citizens that facilitate (or impede) their readiness to act.

Citizenship in its active and passive dimension is a strongly normative concept as it is closely connected to the notion of modern statehood, which is built on the participation of its members (democracy) as well as on the government's provision of social services to its citizens (Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability [DRC], 2011). Active citizenship for emancipatory ends is tacitly presumed as the only (legitimate) form of citizenship (Claussen & Geissler, 1996), denying 'ugly citizenship' (for example political action limiting rather than expanding universal democracy as witnessed within the current rise of right-wing populism) to be a form of citizenship as well as denying people the option of not connecting to civic affairs. Likewise, such passive citizenship (Amna, 2010), however, is included into the formal working definition of this research, as is 'ugly citizenship'. The research thus avoided equating citizenship with "professional citizenship . . . [of

4 Such a procedure is recommended in a research setting as the Philippines, where quantitative data are even more in need of communicative validation often considerably contradicting common sense, as Randy David, one of the leading sociologists of the Philippines, pointed out during a validation interview undertaken with him as part of this study (Quezon City, 13 August 2014). David considers quantitative research as foreign to the oral and personalized culture prevalent in the Philippines and suggests that quantitative data, should, if at all, only be used for validating qualitative or ethnographic data.

an] ever-vigilant civic individual", which Amna (2010, p. 200) identified as the predominant model in citizenship studies.

Why the Philippine Case?

In political theory, as much as in public discourse, concepts of ideal statehood which emerged in the West (and have precipitated in the Philippine legal system) have been used as benchmarks and are often contrasted with lacking Philippine realities (DPC, 2010). This often sets off a negative narrative, referring to the Philippines as a "failing state" (Romero, 2014). Comparing "democratic ideals and [Philippine] realities" – as the title of an introduction into Philippine politics by the Department of Political Science of the Ateneo de Manila University goes (DPC, 2010) – yet calls for some caveats. Like in many other post-colonial countries, constitutional norm and constitutional reality are far apart – a situation activists have likened to an "*ampaw* republic" comparing the Philippine political system to the rice crispies – "tasty but all it has inside is air" (Santiago, 2014). Social and political rights, even if codified, may only be selectively enforced. A study by the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation on working conditions in the Philippines conducted in early 2011 arrived at the finding that violations of national as well as international labor laws "were the rule" ("Labor Abuses Exposed", 2011). Neoliberal-inspired policies have furthermore 'pinched' the developing state in the Philippines by bringing its expansion to a halt. These policies expect people to increasingly fend for themselves, thereby eroding the idea of citizens' entitlement towards the government as duty bearer. Where the state takes on a negligible role in shaping entitlements in everyday life, non-state actors such as families, communities, and enterprises are expected to play the bigger role as service providers and addressees of accountability. Lastly, participation of citizens in political affairs is largely taken as money and pedigree dominated decision-making in an oligarchic state of affairs. This setting of a contested and precarious statehood is the 'habitat' from which the data this article builds on were collected. Nevertheless, the (nation) state remains the significant space of active as well as passive citizenship. Furthermore, the state has been awarded the role of the main rights guarantor in modern political theory and draws much of its legitimacy from this claim. This explains why a research focused on citizenship within the state sphere is not an anachronistic endeavor.

PART ONE: PREVALENT CONCEPTS ON SOCIAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Findings from Problem-Centered Interviews on Citizenship: Public Problem Solving as Predominant Understanding of Citizenship

Asking what Filipinos expect from the government and in how far they are ready to get involved in taking citizenship action, the problem-centered interviews could identify significant differences between respondents who have been active in a political or a community organization and those who have not. Three subgroups of respondents emerged: the *non-activists* or those who have never been active in a political or community organization (12 of 28 research participants); the *left activists*

or those who have been a member of an organization with a left orientation (8 of 28); and the *non-left activists* or those who have been a member of other organizations (also 8 of 28). Despite the differences between the three subgroups, there are significant attitudes which point in one direction, no matter which organizational background the respondents belong to. These basic congruencies serve as the basis to identify general traits of a sense of citizenship in the Philippines. In general, all respondents expressed expectations from the government when it comes to social and public services. Among those who had no left organizational socialization, however, these expectations are more or less limited to times of dearth or, as one respondent put it, "only if you really, really need it". Especially respondents without any organizational background (non-activists) strongly promote local activism. They have a good understanding of civil obligations and are willing to perform these, but they rather tend to act on problems concretely, while shying away from 'big politics' on a national scale. Instead of changing the set-up, they try to make the system work. This is manifested by strong moral orientations and by expressing attitudes that governmentality studies term as "responsibilization" (Bröckling, 2007), for example highlighting a "do-it-yourself" attitude and considering the government as the "last resort", as termed by one non-activist. When asked to define citizenship, respondents without an organizational background assert that it "starts with your family" and that it is everyone's duty to "help each other". Another non-activist says that it is "not only [about] helping others but also helping yourself". When asked what is needed to make the Philippines a better place, especially non-activists merely identify personal change and see individual improvement ("moral recovery") as the only remedy. This strongly person-centered and morally-charged political discourse most often displaces the idea of setting the structures and rules right. One non-activist puts this general sentiment into a nutshell, stating that "each one of us has a contribution to what is happening to the entire society . . . . If you eat candy and it's just okay to throw your candy on the road, that's already a speck of contribution to the whole garbage".

Non-activists strongly believe that "if everybody leads a moral life, the public world of wider society should be in good order" (with a prevalence index [PI] of .85), while activists without a left background are more skeptical about this (PI = .57) and left activists largely reject this statement (PI = .38).[5] However, while non-activists consider moral values (be it neglect for the fellow human being, greed, or the lack of honesty) as the overarching reason for poverty, these factors are also highlighted by respondents with an organizational experience. Nevertheless, like in many other items here,

5 The prevalence index is computed by weighing the responses to an item. With five options, the answer "totally agree" is weighed with 1 and "don't agree at all" with 0. An "agree more or less" is weighed with .75; a "no idea/neither nor etc." with .5; and "actually don't agree" with .25. When everyone totally agreed, the prevalence index thus would be 1; if no one had agreed at all, it would be 0. Quantitative methods such as computing a prevalence index here are used in the first instance to describe the sample and illustrate relations within the survey group, as suggested by Prein, Kelle, and Kluge (1993) in their landmark article on strategies for the integration of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods. I undertook simple quantitative evaluation (and beforehand made use of quantitative survey methods), assuming that the calculated figures at least allow for stating trends. Here, I follow Lamnek (2005) who aims for at least "a modest level of generalization" (p. 186) of qualitative data: "A sociologist should not stop with being amazed by 'what's out there (Was es nicht alles gibt!)', but rather move on in searching for the 'typical' and 'significance' of a single case" (p. 187). In the case of results that are obtained in such manner, Lamnek speaks of "representation" or "typical" (but not of representativeness in a statistical sense).

the differences between those with and those without organizational background are merely of a gradual nature.

Non-activists prefer to act as individuals and less by joining organizations. Evangeline Sucgang (2006) termed such concept of citizenship as "public problem solving", distinguishing it from an attitude of "proactive citizenship". The study could identify an attitude of proactive citizenship especially among those who have spent some time of their formative years in an organization with a left orientation (the so called *aktibistas*). Proactive citizens, defines Sucgang (2006), are those who understand political citizenship as proactive engagement in the public arena, for example by running for public office or joining political rallies and street demonstrations. Citizenship theory usually only considers proactive citizenship as a form of citizenship (ISSP, 2012b). However, both approaches (the individual model behavior stressed in the interviews, and the pressing for structural change) express a strong sense of agency. Instead of being apolitical per se, those termed non-activists are in fact rather supporting and performing a different kind of citizenship.

Correlating with the prevalent community orientation, the research could detect a pronounced focus on hard work (*maningkamot*, as termed by those respondents speaking Cebuano, the main language in the Southern Philippines). When asked to rate the importance of selected factors of *umangat sa buhay* (literally, getting ahead in life) – an item taken from ISSP (2012a) –, hard work was considered "essential" by non-activists (PI = .97) and activists without a left background (PI = .95) and still as "very important" by left activists (PI = .79). Next to education and ambition, hard work is thus considered a panacea for "getting ahead in life", while societal determinants such as political connections (PI = .43), coming from a wealthy family (PI = .38), or giving bribes (PI = .21) are considered of much lesser importance.

Such focus on individual aspiration is confirmed by the ISSP on social inequality (ISSP, 2012a) for the Philippines in general: While education, hard work, and ambition receive a prevalence index of > .80, knowing the right people, coming from a wealthy family, or political connections wither only between .43 and .55, and giving bribes is even considered irrelevant (PI = .24) for "getting ahead in life". In the same way, people from the lower classes seem to be influenced by the principle of merit (which serves as *the* integration mode of modern-capitalist societies), as they did not show lower returns on such meritocratic items.

Finally, when asked what makes a "good citizen", especially non-activists underline the performance of civil duties more than the exercising of citizen rights as the important traits. Even activists with leftist backgrounds do not demand rights without obligations: To a lesser extent they also believe that when rights are fulfilled (such as that to free college education), corresponding duties are called for (like public service after graduation). The realization of rights is seemingly seen as a cooperation between the government and the individual citizen, as evidenced by several respondents emphasizing the idea that availing of government services should be based on the giving of a counterpart.

Most respondents also tend to understand the government as an enabler and less as a provider. For them, people should first try to help themselves (and their family) before turning to the government. Matuschek, Krähnke, Kleemann, and Ernst (2011) term such a mode of referring to a state order as "subsidiarity . . . [for example

the] acceptance of the existing social order, while its deficits must be compensated by initiative of members of society" (p. 145). The ISSP survey on government (ISSP, 2008) mostly supports the findings gathered from the qualitative data, which implies that while most Filipinos do not support the idea of a laissez-faire state (which leaves most to the private), they also do not support what Matuschek et al. (2011) call "social etatism", that is the "awareness of the benefits of a providing, paternalistic society with extensive social systems and regulations of economic life" (p. 145). While it is acknowledged that the government has social obligations, these are considered as subsidiary, which also follows the understanding of the government as the "last resort". The fact that civic duties are defined as "helping yourself" might be the reason why most respondents do not favor benefits for the unemployed but rather approve of increasing employment opportunities. In this regard, the respondents (except the left activists) overwhelmingly believe the poor can escape poverty, "if they only try hard enough" (16 of 20 non-left respondents believe so, with only one ruling this out).

Additionally, the respondents do not even expect the government to be able to fully provide them with their needs: While 20 of 28 respondents think that it makes sense to turn to the government for services, only 8 of 27 said they expect help from the government: "Somehow, *gamay nag-expect ko* (I expect a little)", one respondent explained. Non-activists are very lenient with the government, not expecting much and willing to recognize its good will. They also (more than others) believe that the government is at least partly fulfilling its job. Among the respondents to the qualitative study, only the left activists considerably think of holding the government accountable instead of simply sighing "*government kasi* (it's government, that's why)".

The sense of entitlement turned out much stronger when respondents consider public service as a service in return, for example for taxes or contributions. One respondent even termed government service as "customer service" in return for taxes paid. Such an understanding of the state is transactional rather than rights-based.[6] This resonates with an inimical attitude to the idea of passive citizenship (benefits through citizenship) among the middle class (i.e., taxpayers) in general. Jemy Gatdula (2012) summarizes such an attitude in a nutshell as he criticizes pro-poor legislation as one that "merely encourage[s] people's sense of entitlement [and] also ridiculously abandon[s] the idea that rewards should be based on merit".

Validation with the Quantitative Data: Modest and Very Basic Expectations

The observations made in the problem-centered interviews with young urban professionals are largely supported by data from the ISSP. The ISSP on social inequality (ISSP, 2012a), for instance, shows that Filipinos less favor redistributive measures (such as progressive taxation), but give more importance to creating opportunities for a decent income. Social rights such as the right to housing (PI = .75) or to a decent living standard (*disenteng pamumuhay*) for the unemployed (PI = .73) get widely affirmed but are essentially restricted to a basic definition of these rights (ISSP, 2012a). This, however, is not proof that Filipinos do not appreciate the idea of social equality.

6 Whenever it comes to the right of state services, this is rather justified by mercy-related terms such as *luoy* or *kawawa* (literally, pitiful) for those in need. The respondents, most of whom consider themselves to be middle-class, at the same time clearly rule out to claim state services for themselves on such a basis.

For example, according to the ISSP on citizenship (ISSP, 2012b), 69.2% of the Filipino respondents, agree that it is "definitely" or "probably" the government's responsibility to reduce income differences between the rich and the poor (PI = .67). However, at the same time, Filipinos widely agree with social inequality (or have come to terms with it): 64.3% find it "just" that people with higher incomes can buy better health care (PI = .68) and roughly the same number consider it "just" that people with higher incomes can buy better education (PI = .68). For comparison, in Germany, only 12.3% give such a response (PI = .28).

The government is expected to create equal opportunities (provide job opportunities, help indigent students, but also keep prices low) but at the same time, is not seen to have the task of creating social equality by redistributive measures. Such focus on personal initiative is also shown in the strong emphasis given to the responsibility of the family, especially when it comes to personal care: 96.8% of the Filipino respondents said that they expect family members to primarily take care of children under school age and they do not even expect the government to support them financially in this regard. At the same time, a majority of the Filipino respondents to the ISSP on government (ISSP, 2008) said that they consider public service to be very committed (*talagang seryoso*) to serving the people (PI = .61). The satisfaction rates with government programs on unemployment, providing health care for the sick, or providing a decent living standard for the elderly, all showed PIs of at least > .5. (The high approval rates received by general statements regarding this topic however drop as soon as concrete examples of government performance are being rated.)

This leniency might be explained as the result of a weak sense of entitlement to public service qua citizenship. Everyday observations on the interactions between people and the government confirm that Filipinos seem to consider welfare policies less as obligations of an impersonal state but more as something one must request or ask for (*hingi*). It is quickly considered *bastos* (literally, improper) to insist on one's right but advisable to appeal to the generosity (*pagkamapagbigay*) and goodness (*kabaitan*) of a government official. Or as Randy David (2009) framed it: "The ideal citizen is loyal and grateful, rather than informed and assertive of his rights".[7]

Limited Spaces of Imagination

The general conclusion that can be drawn from the data presented is that (a) there is a high approval for social services in the Philippines, (b) however, the actual expectations towards the state lag far behind. In explaining these modest imaginative spaces of what a government could be good for, one might draw on Bourdieu and Foucault and their concept of normality (Bröckling, 2007). For instance, despite objectively rudimentary and purchasing power-biased social services in the Philippines, the ISSP surveys found hardly any other country where more respondents were satisfied with its public health care system, with 49% of the Filipino respondents being (very) satisfied (ISSP, 2008). In Germany, for comparison, the satisfaction rating is lower by 9%, despite its more extensive and more universal health care system. In many post-

7 The Tagalog terms indicated in brackets are everyday concepts (see Zintl, 1996) which are considered specific for the Philippine political political thinking and which are also drawn upon in media and political discourse, even when English remains the prevalent language.

socialist countries like Bulgaria, Hungary, or Russia, where public service was curbed after the breakdown of state socialism, only 14-24% are (very) satisfied with government performance on health care. Such contingencies can also be observed in many other items of government service and usually surpass determinants such as class, age, or urban-rural differences, assuming that the country of origin is the most significant determinant for citizenship attitudes.

It is apparent that satisfaction rates are less connected to the real extent of public service, but more to subjective expectations. This is shown by the fact that the extent of public service varies much among countries with similar satisfaction rates in the ISSP surveys. Satisfaction (or fulfillment of expectations) seems to rather depend on what one has already experienced, what one is familiar with, and what one considers as 'reasonable' to expect. Such findings show that historical experiences and path dependencies seem to matter. While citizens in post-socialist countries tend to compare the performance of today's government with the extensive social service during state socialism, Filipino respondents explain their low expectations in the context of the underdeveloped state of public service delivery in the Philippines, by counter-asking: "What would you expect, the Philippines is a Third World country, we could not expect more". In the absence of divergent experiences, the given structures and ways of living are considered normal. "People who do not know what they should be getting are always happy with what they have. Ignorance is bliss, after all", Carmelle Harrow and Jereco Paloma (2011) sigh in reference to the poor state of public education.

A history of colonialism, feudalism, capitalism, traditional Catholicism, and finally, neoliberal structural adjustment programs – all of which are connected to a partisan and low-intensity governance accompanied by a pronounced social inequality and largely communitarian ideas – have been virtually embodied by Filipinos in a culturally specific form of "social habitus" (Elias, 1976). People then "tend to consider the possible for the only possible, the achievable for the appropriate and to conform to the given social order without much reflection" (Bourdieu, 1982, pp. 734-735). As the welfare (and participatory) dimensions of the state expansion in the Philippines have been experienced only incompletely, its people still seem to consider the government mainly not as the provider of public service but as an "encumbrance" (Teodoro, 2014). In explaining the continuous high approval ratings of the administration of president Benigno Aquino III (2010-2016), Teodoro (2014) assumes that the government is more appreciated for "not what it has done, but what it hasn't: compared to past administrations, it hasn't killed as many, for example; been involved in as many scandals; or has been as corrupt".

Left Organizations as Schools of Citizenship

Among the respondents to the qualitative study, mainly those who were involved for some time in a left political organization have broader spaces of imagination with regard to government service. They not only show the highest dissatisfaction with the current political and economic system, but are also the only ones who expect

more than basic services from the government and who aim to hold it accountable.[8] It appears that mainly 'leftists' are influenced by an understanding of the state often assumed in the citizenship discourse: One that is not reduced to providing safety nets and equal opportunities, but that also takes the role of correcting social inequalities and securing broad social rights – a state surpassing what Matuschek et al. (2011) termed "subsidiarity".[9] The rights-based approach on which much advocacy of civil society is buttressed seems to have mainly taken root among the left respondents.

PART TWO: COMMUNITARIANISM AS A PREVALENT STATE RESPONSIBILIZATION THEORY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Reinhard Zintl (1996) differentiates between three ideal-typical state responsibility theories as everyday theories. The empirical findings show that Filipinos in general favor neither what Zintl terms *state interventionism* where "the economy only works with constant state intervention", nor a *laissez-faire state* where "the economy operates without single state interventions, [and where] at the most, the state creates an acceptable general set-up" (p. 306). Rather, the data shows that among most respondents (a) a community and family orientation is prevalent and (b) expectations towards the government are only modest. While the government is considered to have social obligations, these are taken to be merely subsidiary. Thus, (c) civil duties are more pronounced than citizen rights and (d) hard work and education are considered the main means of "getting ahead in life". All of these features can be attributed to Zintl's third state responsibilization theory, which he somewhat unfavorably names *patronage*: Here,

> the economy is experienced as a network in which the state appears as one actor among others. While not able to steer it, it is influential enough to favor or limit individual opportunities. One can only watch out how to save one's own skin. (Zintl, 1996, p. 308)

This is similar to what Matuschek et al. (2011, p. 145) termed "subsidiarity", or what in political theory is known widely as communitarianism, differentiating it from two other basic paradigms of modern citizenship, namely the liberal and the republican (Reese, 2015, pp. 272-278; also Jones & Gaventa, 2002).

While liberalism considers society a cold project among monadic individuals resulting in the state's main function to provide institutions for the settling of competing interests, communitarianism has a strong community orientation. It is a political order that relies on moral virtue wherein concrete others (like family and parents) are considered to be mainly responsible for the advancement of an individual (like children). Most barriers to a democratic culture in the Philippines, identified by Fernando Zialcita's contribution to the benchmark compendium on *Democracy and*

8 As the socio-economic variables collected in the ISSP surveys do not offer a meaningful indicator for political affiliation, this assumption however can only be based on the qualitative data and not backed up by the ISSP-data.

9 However, even the left activist respondents do not expect the state to simply just provide, but are also ready to give their counterpart.

Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture (Diokno, 1997), directly or indirectly reflect a communitarian orientation. Clearly, this applies to the traits which Zialcita (1997) terms "familialism", "personalism" (with the prevalence of loyalty to persons over the obedience to norms), and the "weak sense of public good" (p. 41). All these traits express a focus on the concrete other or not-stranger (*hindi ibang tao*, or literally, not another person) and on the immediate community as typical for communitarianism.

Applying an ethnographic approach makes it even easier to track this weak sense of public good and familialism in the Philippine society. It manifests itself in a pronounced delineation between the public and the private. The public space seems to be neglected, conceived as dirty and chaotic (Borchgrevenik, 2014), with the street being an arena of competition, rivalry, and the world of the undetermined. On the other hand, private spaces, such as the family, the *barkada* (peer group), gated communities, and other forms of *Gemeinschaft*, are given high relevance. The house is considered the space where everything has to be in place. Such divide also leads to a kind of legal pluralism (Franco, 2011), in which private rules (be it those that the parents set, or company rules) compete with public law. Government intervention is then often considered as trespassing; and in the case of a company, it cannot be taken for granted that the Labor Code is accepted as the overriding legal principle (Reese & Carreon, 2013). This makes the Philippines a territory dotted by millions of tiny kingdoms with their private set of rules, interrupted by public spaces which are considered the responsibility of the government – "and government is not you", as Randy David explains (Quezon City, 13 August 2014).

Such dichotomy of public and private is also reflected in the strict division between *hindi ibang tao* (one of us) and *ibang tao* (stranger), which Enriquez (1992) considers as basic for social understandings in the Philippines. While family and community values among those considered *hindi ibang tao* are well developed in the Philippines, a culture of encounters (*Begegnungskultur*) with strangers (*ibang tao*) seems to be largely absent. Sociologist Randy David (2012a) observed that "forms of solidarity are rooted in a sense of duty to people with whom we share personal space . . . . In the anonymous setting of the modern city, we no longer feel so obligated".

Poverty, another barrier listed by Zialcita (1997), also shows a strong connection to communitarianism as it leads people to favor communitarian solutions. The immediate vicinity is globally the preferred space of activity for poor people as this is where they feel more in control than in middle and upper class biased politics (Berner, 1997). Being treated in a derogatory way in their work life or when dealing with government bureaucracy and people of higher ranking, only friends, neighbors, or the family offer a level of reliability. The space outside of one's own community is furthermore considered to be *terra incognita*, or a foreign territory: There, others have the say, make the rules, and decide how these are to be interpreted – in a language that is highly incomprehensible for the poor and those with no formal education, be it the legal language or English, as is the case in the Philippines. Politics is not only *up there* but also *out there*.

However, activities within one's vicinity, this is the sphere in between the family (the private) and formal politics (the public), not only play an important role for service delivery, but also serve as building blocks of democracy where "members learn about their rights, and develop more effective citizenship skills and practices" (DRC,

2011, p. 21). Communitarianism thus is not pre-democratic but a different kind of democracy – just like "public problem solving" (Sucgang, 2006) is a different form of citizenship. Yet, it is a limited form of democracy – one that is based on selective association and parochialism, a democracy of "a thousand petty fortresses" (Walzer, 1998, p. 348). In Filipino terms: The attitude of *tayo-tayo* (amongst us) or *barrio-barrio* (amongst our village) prevails; extending the exclusive "me/we" (*kami*) to an inclusive "we" (*tayo*), but only including those who are identified to be one of "us" (*namin*). It is a space where "we" are not alone, but at the same time where "we" can stay just among ourselves. *Tayo-tayo* is more than the liberal *kanya-kanya* (everyone for themselves or for their loved ones), but it is an exclusive inclusivity nevertheless. Here, there might be tolerance but no hospitality towards the other (*ibang tao*), as Rodriguez (2009) explains.

As shown above, communitarianism is closely entangled with the barriers to a democratic culture that are related to space or, as Zialcita (1997) points out, to the inclination towards the concrete and proximate. The other barriers that Zialcita identifies – these are the hierarchical relations (leading to a lack of discourse culture) or a limited discourse on democracy and its meaning in the vernacular – are less obviously connected to communitarianism. Nevertheless, communitarianism facilitates the persistence of these barriers.

As the identity of the individual – and, within a rudimentary welfare regime such as the Philippines, also social security – is strongly linked to membership in a family or community, and there is the tendency to let collective needs and communal solidarities prevail over individual rights. Individuals are expected to be empathetic (*pakiramdam*), to give in, and to get along with the group (*pakikisama*), which often means: to comply with the group. From a very young age, people experience that those who are questioning and objecting (*hirit*, or literally, talking back) are labeled as *disturbo* (troublemaker) or as *makulit* (pushy).

Likewise, it is still considered as *walang respeto* (disrespectful) by many parents if their children (merely) answer back (*sumasagot*). Not used to a critique-friendly culture, many Filipinos take criticisms personally and then react easily *pikon* (touchy) – even if these criticisms are aired out in relation to their function (for example, as public official) and not to them as an individual, as Randy David explains (Quezon City, 13 August 2014). This attitude complicates the emergence of a public discourse. "Our political culture is not used to frank talk", says the editorial of the Philippine Daily Inquirer: "Between political bombast (or bomba) . . . and political praise or promise (or *bola* [to flatter someone] as everyone still says) . . . , there is hardly anything" ("Candid Talk", 2012).

Such tendency towards *pakikisama* (to comply with a group) might also be partly responsible for the lack of reflection and discourse – values which Zialcita (1997) considers as further barriers to the development of a democratic culture in the Philippines. The Management Association of the Philippines complained that, in 2010, 4 out of 10 new graduates were not hired because they lacked "soft" competencies, among them critical thinking, initiative, and effective communication skills ("Not All Sunlight", 2010). Citizenship theory, however, considers the ability to be critical – this is post-conventional thinking – and to question the given (*hirit*) as essential for developing citizenship attitudes (Claussen & Geissler, 1996). Yet, the mainstream Philip-

pine educational system is considered to largely produce pre-conventional fear and incentive-driven characters (Tan, 2014a) or "good girls and boys" – compliant persons within a conventional moral system in the terms of Lawrence Kohlberg (1971).

Overlooking the individual and focusing instead on the community (families or households) as the smallest unit of accountability and responsibility also makes communitarianism prone to idealizing communities and neglect inequalities and power asymmetries within the community (Berner & Philipps, 2004). Furthermore, there is a connivance of communitarianism with a feudal setting: While communitarianism in its ideal type is based on a society of equals, it shares with feudalism a similar concept of public service, which they both conceptualize more as benevolence and less as a right – even though resulting from a different logic. While communitarianism stresses sympathy, feudalism builds on the idea of asymmetrical rights. Both social systems, however, are not supportive of claim-making by commoners. Both in communitarianism and feudalism, claims are framed as personal requests (*hingi*), asking for favors. Attitudes such as *mabait* (generous), *madaling lapitan* (approachable), or *malapit sa mahihirap* (pro-poor), which David (2012b) considers "the most common words one hears when Filipino voters talk about the politicians they like", are consistent with the communitarian logic of proximity (*lapit*) although "proceed[ing] from the standpoint of the subjugated in a sharply hierarchical society". In such a context, citizen's charters and citizenship education tend to stay rather *ampaw* (see the analogy to rice crispies), as they are merely symbolic and do not (yet) figure as an integral part of the social order. The hidden curriculum of everyday culture, such as for instance considering it as *bastos* (improper) to contradict (*hirit*) a person of authority, is then more influential on political action than the manifest content of formal citizenship education.

Connivance of Communitarianism and Neoliberalism

Communitarianism not only connives with feudalism but also with liberalism and its current specification, neoliberalism. Even if communitarianism is based on different premises than neoliberalism (the political theory most equivalent to the state responsibility theory of laissez-faire), they meet in their promotion of a lean state and in considering the government as the "last resort". Both focus on responsibilization and are biased towards voluntarism. Those pushing for neoliberal reforms can therefore make use of communitarian ideas to propagate their agenda. Both approaches result in a kind of proto-welfare state that does not offer more than basic provisions and contribute to the persistence of a weak state/strong society dichotomy. The legal pluralism mentioned as characteristic for Philippine legal culture is an example for this. In a framework of responsibilization/voluntarism, economic problems are constructed as personal problems, suggesting the use of individual survival strategies like *maningkamot* (hard work) and making people responsible for their own unfortunate situation. Instead of calling for concerted state action, socially developed circumstances are framed into personal failure, thereby becoming politically defused: "It's up to you", a remark one often hears in the Philippines.

Furthermore, communitarianism is not a functional solution to ensure the institutionalization of the principle of rights and dignity to every human being. While

kindness (*bait*), charity (*awa*), and intersubjectivity (*pakikipagkapwa*) are mainly situated within a space where people can see and know each other, such communitarian *Gemeinschaft* cannot serve as a model in highly differentiated, pluralistic mass societies (Reese, 2015, pp. 529-533). As Zialcita (1997) identifies, "one major problem in the Philippines [is that] the rights of the anonymous stranger continue to be disregarded. . . . Although we are extremely helpful towards those whom we have met face-to-face and whom we trust, we tend to ignore the rights of those whom we do not know and will never meet" (p. 42). *Pakikiisa*, or "being one with another", cannot assure the rights of the *ibang tao* which others are considered to be within anonymous large-scale societies. Furthermore, *pakikiisa* requires that the involved are "nearly equal in social status, i.e. in money, power, and influence", as Enriquez (1992, p. 66) points out. While compassion might be a necessary requirement for rights to be respected and granted as moral action theory assumes (Reese, 2015, pp. 84-86), at the same time, it is not a sufficient basis for a rights-based approach since it builds on and even reinforces social asymmetries (as the prevalence of drawing on pity (*kawawa*) as the basis for one's social action towards the poor, as the qualitative research amongst middle-class respondents illustrates). Compassion and moral discernment are too unreliable and selective to serve as the basis for rights claims, and they eventually overwhelm resources of solidarity.

The prevalence of communitarianism in the Philippines leads to the reign of two dichotomist social philosophies in society: While the *Gemeinschaft* of the *hindi ibang tao* (the concrete other or non-stranger) is governed by communitarian principles, the *Gesellschaft* is de facto ruled by a vulgar liberalism bordering to the pre-contractual natural state in liberalism. In such a state of society, where *kanya-kanya* (everyone for themselves or for their loved ones) serves as the overriding principle, indifference is the normal state of affairs, and interest in the other only comes up in looming win-win situations, as conflict arises when there is competition over scarce resources (David, 2012a). Eventually, many features that categorize a society as liberal are thus characteristic of the Philippine society: Employers have de facto extensive dispositional rights as economic citizens in their own company; the taxation of income and wealth is moderate; the social system is based considerably on self-responsibility, while education privileges children of the propertied and educated classes.

OUTLOOK: DEEPENING THE SENSE OF CITIZENSHIP BY TRANSCENDING COMMUNITARIANISM

One of the challenges for those interested in consolidating the sense of citizenship in the Philippines lies in broadening the definition of *concrete* state responsibilities, that is making claims towards the government *thinkable* as much as considering "big politics" to be *shapeable* by common citizens (and not prerogative of the oligarchy). However, deepening citizenship does not imply the need of resorting to liberalism as citizenship paradigm. Several elements of Filipino culture might as well support a *republican* set-up for a society (as elaborated in Reese, 2015), in which no one is left behind even if one is of no use to others (as in liberalism) nor loved by others (as in communitarianism). Here the social philosophy which Jones and Gaventa (2002) identify as *republicanism* might be a way out: It aims to synthesize communitarian

and liberal elements by "attempt(ing) to incorporate the liberal notion of the self-interested individual within the communitarian framework of egalitarianism and community belonging" (p. 4). It is similar to communitarianism in so far as it is based on the anthropology of an embedded self (*kapwa*). But it is also like liberalism since it sticks to the idea of universal understanding of rights and follows liberalism in situating the human rights conceptually and ontologically as prior to society, therefore not compromising individual for group rights.

Striving for republicanism suggests a creative reinterpretation of basic concepts of Filipino political culture that underpin communitarianism. It is essential in deepening a rights-based perspective that rights are not only accorded and asserted for those one identifies as *hindi ibang tao* (the concrete other) but that every single individual is acknowledged and recognized as a rights bearer. Concepts such as *pakikisama* (joining and complying with others in a group) and *bayanihan* (mutual support) or concepts such as *malasakit* (compassion) and *pakikiramdam* (empathy) may also serve as resources. Likewise, traits such as respect (*respeto*), recognition (*pagpapahalaga*), dignity (*dangal*), and pride (*amor proprio/garbo*) might also be tapped as resources to develop the recognition of the rights of others. At the same time, these traits can serve as important ingredients for citizenship action. This can be done by developing a consciousness to "have the right to have rights", as Hannah Arendt (1949, p. 7) once put the concept of human rights in a nutshell. Attitudes such as acting *tampo* (sulky), *kulit* (persistent), or *pasaway* (defiant) as well as making *reklamo* (complain) to get what one believes one is entitled to, at least show that the rights-consciousness in the Philippines goes beyond merely being *masunurin* (obedient) and the overriding preference for conflict avoidance and smooth interpersonal relations (abbreviated as SIR) that are often considered typical for Philippine society.

In the end, it is not the Filipino culture per se, but feudalism, social inequality, and the hierarchical and authoritarian elements dominant in society which are major stumbling blocks to the development of a kind of citizenship that is grounded on the fundamental idea of equality among all citizens. Not falling for a voluntarist shortcoming, this paper does not mainly blame the lack of citizenship action on the Filipino citizens themselves. Instead of supporting moralism (that is focusing on value formation and individual redemption), which is identified as a typical trait of communitarianism, the paper supports the perspective of Jemy Gatdula (2010) that "we are not definitely a damaged culture. . . . If our electorate has not matured, it's precisely because the economic circumstances of our citizens did not allow such maturity to happen and the elite, by maintaining protectionist attitudes and patronage system in business and politics, ensures that such maturity did not happen".

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Niklas Reese is a social scientist and freelance journalist with regional focus on the Philippines, Germany, and Latin America. He has been working on issues of democratization, gender, migration, social movements, and social security. He completed his PhD on The Sense of Citizenship in the Philippines in 2015. Since 1997, he is engaged in political solidarity work through his involvement with the philippinenbüro – a socio-political information center on the Philippines in Germany.

▸ Contact: reese@asienhaus.de